

**ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE**

Screening methods for identifying compounds that bind to or activate corticotropin releasing factor<sub>2</sub> receptors (CRF<sub>2</sub>R) and regulate or potentially regulate skeletal muscle mass or function *in vivo* are disclosed. Also disclosed are screening methods for identifying compounds that prolong or augment the activation of CRF<sub>2</sub>Rs or of CRF<sub>2</sub>R signal transduction pathways, increase CRF<sub>2</sub>R or increase CRF expression are provided. Pharmaceutical compositions comprising CRF<sub>2</sub>R agonists, antibodies to CRF<sub>2</sub>R and methods for increasing skeletal muscle mass or function or for the treatment of skeletal muscle atrophy using CRF<sub>2</sub>R as the target for intervention and methods for treatment of muscular dystrophies are described.